

# **Drinking Water Notice Issued to Water Customers in Lewes After Lead Levels Exceed EPA Action Level**

DOVER – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing that the Lewes Board of Public Works (BPW) has issued a drinking water notice to customers after tests showed elevated levels of lead in the water. DPH received notification late last week from BPW that drinking water samples collected in August showed an exceedance of the EPA Action Level for lead. Lab analysis found that the 90th percentile result of 26.5 ug/L exceeded the EPA Action Level of 15 ug/L. Sampling consisted of 10 samples collected in different parts of the BPW service area with results ranging from non-detect to 38.4 ug/L.

DPH is actively working with the Lewes BPW to conduct additional sampling and gather information to help define the scope and cause of the issue. Both agencies believe the presence of lead is likely associated with lead service pipes serving individual homes and buildings, or with plumbing components (pipe, fixtures, solder, etc.) within them that contain lead. The Lewes BPW is working to identify the impacted areas, but the differences in housing age, construction materials and other factors will make it difficult to identify all the impacted structures.

Residents who are concerned that their plumbing may contain lead should have their water tested, as testing is the only way to know definitively if lead is present. The required test kits are available at private laboratories; homeowners should ensure testing takes place through an EPA-drinking-water-certified laboratory. To find one, call the Safe Drinking

Water Hotline at 800-426-4791 or visit [www.epa.gov/safewater/labs](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/labs).

In addition to posting the public notice on its website, BPW is mailing the notice to customers' homes and working with the City of Lewes to email the information to residents as well. BPW will also test water in schools prior to opening next week, as well as Beebe Healthcare and a long-term care facility served by the utility's system. Posting of public notices after a lead level exceedance is required by state law. DPH is working with BPW to resolve the issue and will conduct more frequent monitoring of the water system.

"Exposure to lead in drinking water is a concern, particularly for young children and pregnant women," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "While we work with the Lewes Board of Public Works to identify what is causing the presence of lead, there are steps residents can take to reduce potential exposure to it."

In order to reduce potential exposure to lead, DPH advises customers who are concerned they may have lead in their plumbing to take the following steps:

- Run the water for 30 seconds to flush lead from plumbing prior to using the water.
- Use cold water for cooking and preparing baby formula. Hot water in contact with the pipes can leach more lead, so using cold water can reduce exposures.
- Consider bottled water as an alternative source. Additionally, there are filters available for home use that will remove lead. NSF International maintains a list of filter products certified to remove lead.
- Do not boil water. Boiling water does not remove lead.

Bathing and showering should be safe, even if the water contains lead over EPA's action level. Human skin does not absorb lead in water.

Exposure to high levels of lead in tap water can cause health effects, impacting the kidneys, nervous system and other body systems. Lead can also impact the intellectual and physical development of children. There are often no outward signs of lead exposure, but a simple blood test can determine a child's blood lead level.

Most studies show that exposure to lead-contaminated water alone would not be likely to elevate blood lead levels in most adults, even exposure to water with a lead content close to the EPA action level for lead of 15 parts per billion (ppb). Risk will vary, however, depending on the individual, the circumstances and the amount of water consumed. For example, infants who drink formula prepared with lead-contaminated water may be at a higher risk because of the large volume of water they consume relative to their body size. Anyone who is concerned that they, or their children, have been exposed to lead should talk to their doctor about a blood lead test.

For more information about the health effects of lead, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tips/water.htm>. or call the DPH Healthy Homes program at 302-744-4546. For more information about testing your home's drinking water, visit <https://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-exposures-lead#testdw>.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS,*

*urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*